



## *Report to the Auburn City Council*

Information Item

12

Agenda Item No.

City Manager's Approval

**To:** Mayor and City Council Members  
**From:** Robert Richardson, City Manager  
By: Mark D'Ambrogio, Fire Chief  
**Date:** January 26, 2009  
**Subject:** Bureau of Reclamation Lands Adjacent to the City of Auburn

### *The Issue*

Shall the Council send a letter requesting assistance regarding the termination of the Cooperative Agreement between the Bureau of Reclamation and Cal Fire for wild land fire protection and vegetation management in the Auburn Recreation Area adjacent to the City of Auburn?

### *Conclusion and Recommendation*

It is recommended that a letter requesting assistance regarding the termination of the Cooperative Agreement between the Bureau of Reclamation and Cal Fire for wild land fire protection and vegetation management in the Auburn Recreation Area adjacent to the City of Auburn be sent on behalf of the Auburn City Council.

### *Background*

In late October of 2008, the Bureau of Reclamation forwarded a letter to Cal Fire to inform them of the Cooperative Agreement termination as of January 1, 2009. This Cooperative Agreement provided for fire suppression and emergency services as well as vegetation management projects in the Auburn State Recreation Area of which include lands adjacent to the City of Auburn. Perhaps the most significant project within these lands is the American River Shaded Fuel Break; a cooperative fuel reduction program involving the City of Auburn, Cal Fire, and State Parks. The termination of this Cooperative Agreement will eliminate project implementation on the public lands and perhaps put lives and property of Auburn City citizens and public safety personnel at risk. In addition, elimination of work to the

---

Shaded Fuel Break on public lands may jeopardize the integrity of the Shaded Fuel Break on private lands of which has been ongoing over the last several years and will continue to do so.

**Fiscal Impact**

Fiscal impacts may include greater exposure to loss of life, property, and economic stability due to the potential disaster of wild land fire. Additional costs may incur by City public safety resources in providing necessary emergency services to Bureau of Reclamation areas in an effort protect the City of Auburn.

**Attachments:**

Recommend letter to Senator Feinstein

Letter from the Bureau of Reclamation to Cal Fire

January 27, 2009

Honorable Diane Feinstein  
1 Post Street, Suite 2450  
San Francisco, CA 94104

Dear Senator Feinstein:

We respectfully request your assistance in enacting legislation that will protect the lives and property of residents in the City of Auburn and the lives of local firefighters who are dedicated to saving our small town.

For approximately three decades, the federal Bureau of Reclamation (BOR), which owns tens of thousands of acres known as the Auburn Recreation Area, has contracted with Cal Fire to provide vegetation management and fire suppression. Since over one million people visit this area every year, the potential for human-caused ignition of a wild land fire is very high. In order to mitigate the potentially damaging effects of a catastrophic wild land fire rapidly climbing up the oak- and pine-covered canyon walls and into our neighborhoods and business district, we have worked closely with private property owners and Cal Fire to reduce the dangerous levels of wood fuel buildup by constructing a 300-foot wide American River Shaded Fuel Break and enacted some of the most stringent ordinances in California. Under the current arrangement, the consensus locally is that much more can be done by federal officials to ensure adequate amounts of dangerous wood fuel is removed each year from the steep canyon walls.

However, to the surprise of many, the BOR has suddenly cancelled the Cooperative Agreement with Cal Fire for wild land fire protection and vegetation management activities in the large Auburn Recreation Area. As seen in Enclosure 1, the BOR gives two reasons for unilaterally canceling the agreement: (a) a lack of authority under federal law and (b) increased costs. The cancellation of this agreement, effective January 1, 2009, means that wood fuel removal activities will not occur during the critical winter and spring months before fire season. It has also created uncertainty regarding what entity or entities will fight fires in the American Recreation Area and how they will be paid. The sudden cancellation of the agreement puts city residents and local firefighters at greater risk.

We request that you work to enact urgency legislation to either: (a) Authorize BOR to sign a Cooperative Agreement with CalFire or another reliable firefighting agency to provide aggressive vegetation management activities year-around and firefighting during fire season or (b) Permit the City of Auburn to annex adjacent lands in the Auburn Recreation Area so that we can provide aggressive vegetation management and fire suppression in this high hazard area.

As you know, thousands of fires over the last two years have burned 2.9 million acres in California. These fires spewed tons of toxic air pollutants and greenhouse gases into the air, destroyed thousands of jobs, and created desolate moonscapes where wildlife can no longer live. As the Congress debates about how to spend trillions of dollars during the next several years on various government programs, it seems eminently reasonable that the federal government prioritize public safety and act as much more responsible steward of the wild lands owned by taxpayers. We would be happy to work with your office in crafting legislation that will protect local residents and local firefighters.

Sincerely,

\_\_\_\_\_  
Mayor Mike Holmes

\_\_\_\_\_  
Councilman Keith Nesbitt

\_\_\_\_\_  
Vice Mayor Bridget Powers

\_\_\_\_\_  
Councilman Bill Kirby

\_\_\_\_\_  
Councilman Kevin Hanley

cc:

Senator Barbara Boxer

Congressman Tom McClintock

Bureau of Reclamation, Central California Area Office

Cal Fire

Placer County Board of Supervisors

Local Fire Safe Councils

Enclosure: Letter from BOR to Cal Fire, October 31, 2008.



IN REPLY REFER TO:

CC-418  
LND-6.00

## BUREAU OF RECLAMATION

Central California Area Office  
7794 Folsom Dam Road  
Folsom, California 95630-1799

OCT 31 2008

Mr. Case Buttermann  
CalFire, Nevada-Yuba-Placer Unit 1  
13760 Lincoln Way  
Auburn, CA 95603

Subject: Termination of Cooperative Agreement 06FG201002

Dear Mr. Buttermann:

The Bureau of Reclamation has enjoyed and plans to continue our long and productive working relationship with CalFire. The purpose of this letter is to provide you written notification that because it has been determined Reclamation no longer has the authority under TITLE 16, USC 594 to enter into a cooperative agreement with CalFire for fire protection of the Department of the Interior lands and because of increased costs, Cooperative Agreement 06FG201002 (Agreement) is terminated for Wild Land Fire Protection Services as of October 1, 2008. Other special project services provided for in the Agreement, to include the Fire Chief position, will terminate as of January 1, 2009. Authority to terminate the Cooperative Agreement is given on page 14 of the current Agreement.

Reclamation is considering several options for continuing wild land fire protection and vegetation management activities and will keep you informed regarding the status of this process.

Thank you for your time and consideration. We look forward to continuing a positive cooperative relationship with CalFire. For further information on this action please contact Laura Caballero at 916-989-7172 or [lcaballero@mp.usbr.gov](mailto:lcaballero@mp.usbr.gov).

Sincerely,

Michael R. Finnegan  
Area Manager

cc: See next page.

cc: Continued from previous page.

Mr. Scott Nakaji  
Gold Fields District  
7806 Folsom Auburn Road  
Folsom, CA 95630

Mr. Mike Lynch  
Superintendent, Auburn State Recreation Area  
501 El Dorado Street  
Auburn, CA 95603-4949

TOTAL P.02